

**WOMEN LAUGHING ALONE WITH SALAD**  
by Sheila Callaghan

*Note: The play title refers to a sub-meme of the stock photography cliché meme. Please refer to the following web pages for the images referenced throughout:*

<http://thehairpin.com/2011/01/women-laughing-alone-with-salad>

<http://thehairpin.com/2011/11/women-struggling-to-drink-water>

**ACT ONE**

**PART ONE: THE PARK**

Lights up on three women of varying ages sitting in a park. They all have huge bowls of salad and forks. TORI, 20-25, wears a tank top and yoga pants, and carries a mat. SANDY, late 50s, wears a tastefully luxe ensemble. MEREDITH, 30-35, wears some sort of retro 50's outfit with postmodern touches.

They eat their salad like it's the most delicious and hilarious thing ever. It goes on for a while. They eat, glance at each other in acknowledgement, laugh, eat, play with cherry tomatoes, etc. It is just so much frivolity.

It goes on for a full three minutes. Seriously. Maybe longer. During the eating, the women eventually become skittish, suspicious, catty, possessive. You're looking at my salad? Don't covet my cucumber. That kind of thing.

Meanwhile, a GUY walks by, talking on the phone. Cute, scrubby, late 20's. The second he stops before them, they all freeze, faces screeching in ecstasy, salad half-way to their mouths. Their eyes watch him.

He does not notice them.

GUY

...so why couldn't she ask me herself?

...oh

...oh REALLY

... ok. Then no.

... because no. I'm not buying her fucking priest boyfriend his fucking top shelf booze.

... because I'm busy. She can buy it her fucking self.

... I am not a dick to her. I just despise being manipulated.

... of course you are. You have to be. You're her employee. I'm not. I'm just the wet fleshy blob she expelled from her vagina 29 years ago.

... okay. Just tell her I said she can go fuck herself. Thanks. Also tell her Tuesday dinner sounds great. I'll be there at 7.

...ok thanks bubeye.

He hangs up and exits.

The women unfreeze. Glare at one another. Take a final few bites of salad. Then exit, carrying their precious salad bowls with them.

## PART TWO: ROOFTOP BAR

MEREDITH walks over to the bar to get a drink. Notices GUY.

IN THE BACKGROUND—billboard advertising “OMNI Wireless Service.” Photo of a WOMAN LAUGHING ALONE WITH SALAD next to a WOMAN STRUGGLING TO DRINK WATER photo, both with the slogan “Handleman’s Lite Dressing. For the YOU in You.” Salad dressing logo.

MEREDITH

Ha! He's looking at me again. Saw me dancing downstairs. Six years of jazz, two of tap, two months of ballet before the teacher told me I was too fat to be in the Christmas show. Also gymnastics. I probably should lead with that, right? Guys like chicks who are flexible. Not sure why it's more fun to fuck a girl with her knee behind her ear. Wouldn't you love to find out. I bet I remind you of your mom a little. Meat on her bones. I can smother you with my maternal bosom. You want to be smothered by my maternal bosom.

I don't want to be a slut and fuck you the second we go back to your place, but well I kind of do. I just don't want you to think it's my idea. Thank god I'm a good dancer.

Okay he's still looking. But he isn't moving. He could be a freakshow. I don't mind, I just want to make sure I know what I'm getting myself into. I can tell him about the time I was in Berlin at that club and that guy told me he was a producer for a TV show where kids dance and he asked if I would go on it, and I was too high to believe him so I just kept laughing. If I tell him that he'll think I'm someone worth fucking. Or maybe he'll think I'm desperate. Well I'm both. I can be both, right?

GUY approaches.

GUY

Hi.

MEREDITH

Hi.

GUY

I saw you dancing.

MEREDITH

I saw you see me. One time I was at this big club in Berlin in this converted powerplant and this guy came over to me and told me he was a producer for a TV show where kids dance and he asked if I would go on it, but like I was too high to believe him so like, I just kept laughing.

GUY

He was probably just trying to get in your pants.

MEREDITH

But I'm a really good dancer. I took tap and ballet as a kid. And gymnastics. I can put my knee behind my ear.

GUY

Yay. Cool.

MEREDITH

What about you?

GUY

I've never been to Berlin. But I'm flexible for a guy. I can do the splits.

MEREDITH

Like right now?

GUY

Only when I'm super drunk and jamming out pretty hard.

MEREDITH

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Are you in a band?

GUY

Karaoke. In real life I'm a creative.

MEREDITH

You're a creative, or creative?

GUY

A creative. I'm in a creative field.

MEREDITH

You look like you're in a band.

GUY

So does every other asshole in here. I like your style. You're like retro. Like Bettie Page-ish.

MEREDITH

It's just the bangs--

GUY

A pin-up. Yeah. Do you have any tattoos?

MEREDITH

One. On the back of my shoulder. It says "Winona Forver." It actually says "Forver." The dude misspelled it. But I thought it was so funny I kept it. I also have a secret tattoo.

GUY

Where?

MEREDITH

On my lower lip. Inside.

GUY

Can I see it?

MEREDITH pulls down her lower lip.

GUY

"Bite me." That's great. It's got like double meaning.

MEREDITH

Do you? Have tattoos?

GUY

I have a skull right above my pubic bone.

MEREDITH

Because your dick is poison?

GUY

Because I'm an idiot. I did it when I was fifteen. But I don't regret it. It's kind of like, I dunno. A body diary.

MEREDITH

Yeeaahhh.... Cool.

GUY

Are you drunk?

MEREDITH

A little.

GUY

You seem fucked up.

MEREDITH

I should have had more than just salad for lunch.

GUY

You're not a salad-eater.

MEREDITH

I am.

GUY

I *abhor* salad.

MEREDITH

Ever hear that quote about the typical French woman, how she sees herself as beautiful despite her physical flaws, because she's worth the effort of eating well and taking care of herself? She *deserves* to be slim and healthy? More than she deserves that piece of cake? When I eat salad I feel like I'm a French woman loving the fuck out of myself. In the 20's. Because those bitches were SUPER tiny. Did you know there are more lingerie shops in Paris than bakeries?

GUY

No. I like you. I like the way you talk. I like the way you dress. I like the way you dance.

MEREDITH

I like the way you like that stuff about me. I also like the way you flirt.

GUY

I don't really try to flirt. I just don't generally talk to girls I'm not interested in sleeping with.

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MEREDITH

This conversation just got 20 percent more interesting.

GUY

Only 20?

MEREDITH

Needs room to rise. Like a cake.

GUY

You like cake.

MEREDITH

Not as much as salad.

GUY

I'm sensing a theme.

MEREDITH

Guys love girls who love salad. The media told me.

GUY

I love girls who love cake.

MEREDITH

You're either lying or you have a bulimia fetish.

GUY

Both.

MEREDITH

Are *you* drunk?

GUY

Yeah.

MEREDITH

What are you drinking about?

GUY

Right now? You.

MEREDITH

Ha!

GUY

Seriously. I've been trying to get the courage to come over here.

MEREDITH

I'm not *that* scary.

GUY

You're scarier than you think, Meredith.

Beat.

MEREDITH

I didn't tell you my name.

GUY

You didn't have to.

MEREDITH

Okay.

Beat.

Now what?

GUY

I wanna say some dirty dirty shit to you.

MEREDITH

Okay.

GUY

Where should I start?

MEREDITH

My mouth. Tell me what you think of it.

GUY

I picture it wrapped around my cock.

MEREDITH

Wow. What about my wrists.

GUY

I hold you down by them while I push myself into you.

MEREDITH

Damn. We got there fast.

GUY

You don't like to waste time.

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Neither do you. MEREDITH

So let's go GUY

Where MEREDITH

In the bathroom GUY

Yeah? MEREDITH

In the alley GUY

Yeah? MEREDITH

In the basement GUY

Yeah? MEREDITH

On the surface of the sun GUY

Yeah. MEREDITH

Now. GUY

No. MEREDITH

When? GUY

Later. I need to yank you out of time first. BANG. MEREDITH

Music changes. They are in 20's Paris. Couples jazz-step drunkenly, drink moonshine, etc.

MEREDITH and GUY start dancing.

MEREDITH

We're in Paris now. 1920. Everything is so decadent. The drinks are decadent. The music is decadent. My toes are decadent. Do you feel it?

GUY

I don't feel any particular way. I just am.

MEREDITH

See that's because you're a dude. You don't need to explain or justify yourself. You're just allowed to *be*.

GUY

You're right. I never question why I am the way I am. I jerk off to porn a few times a week. I have more money than all my friends and spend it too quickly. I called my mom once when I was getting a blowjob from a prostitute. I just don't give a fuck.

MEREDITH

*Spectacular.*

GUY

It is. My mom's a cunt.

MEREDITH

Do I remind you of her?

GUY

Yeah, kind of.

MEREDITH

Why?

GUY

Because you don't seem to care what I think of you. Because you probably have a higher tolerance for pain than me. Because you're probably smarter than me. Than *I*.

MEREDITH

Do I look like her?

GUY

Yeah, a little. I mean, a version of her. Before I was born.

MEREDITH

Do you wanna fuck your mother?

GUY

Not literally, but sometimes, yeah. Like, rage-fuck. Like, fuck you for making my dad

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split. Or fuck you for getting older and obsessing about your looks. Or fuck you for making me love horseback riding and snowboarding and girls who won't eat pasta.

MEREDITH

You're rich?

GUY

Maybe.

MEREDITH

This night is great. This is a great night. Like the air is moist and heavy and filled with adventure and I'm gonna grab a plastic knife and cut myself a slice.

GUY

Devil's food.

MEREDITH unstraps a flask from her garter, takes a belt, and hands it to GUY. He also takes a belt.

MEREDITH

Does it taste like lighter fluid?

GUY

I didn't taste it.

GUY screws on the cap and tucks the flask slowly into her garter. His hand remains on her thigh. Her breath catches.

MEREDITH

Now.

GUY

Where.

MEREDITH

Close.

GUY

Bathroom, alley, basement, sun.

MEREDITH

Carpet.

GUY

Whose?

MEREDITH

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Yours.

GUY

Um fuck okay. I have to ask the girl I came with.

MEREDITH

Oh. She's here?

GUY

Yeah.

MEREDITH

Is she skinny?

GUY

Yeah.

MEREDITH

Like how skinny?

GUY

Like so skinny people worry about her.

MEREDITH

Is she so skinny I could shove her entire body up my ass without any lube?

GUY

You want to shove my girlfriend up your ass.

MEREDITH

YES I DO, OKAY? Because I'm tired of pretending to be something I'm not. Civilized. Don't make me civilized, Person-Whose-Name-I-Don't-Know yet. I don't want to be your girlfriend. I want to fuck your girlfriend while you watch. I want to make her come harder and louder than you ever could. I want you to fear me, and I want her to fear you fearing me. I want to lead with my mass, I want the gravity of my circumference to suck you and everyone you love into me, and I want you to stick there against my body like a suction cup.

GUY

Word.

TORI appears. She sips a drink forlornly in the corner.

GUY

That's her. But she's not really my girlfriend.

MEREDITH

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Who is she?

GUY

This girl who's in love with me I think.

MEREDITH

You "think?"

GUY

Yeah. I'm pretty sure.

MEREDITH

You're not in love with her?

GUY

I don't know. Maybe. But I may not have that gene.

MEREDITH

What gene?

GUY

The love gene. I mean I enjoy being adored. I have empathy for people, like real empathy, like my heart actually hurts when she cries and stuff, but I don't really have the other thing. The step *after* empathy. Like that moment of self-annihilation when you kind of become the other person.

MEREDITH

Then why don't you just hang around with me? I don't require annihilation. Which makes me a lot less work than some emaciated butt-plug.

GUY

Hey.

MEREDITH

Don't act offended. You're the one who won't call her your girlfriend.

GUY

That doesn't mean I don't respect her.

MEREDITH

I wonder if she'd agree with you on that. Should we ask her?

GUY

No.

MEREDITH

Wow. Can almost hear the sound of your balls shrinking. Is Paris a bit much for you? Too decadent?

GUY

I don't even know why we're here.

MEREDITH

I was romanticizing a time when the feminine ideal was robust and autonomous.

GUY

You know what I think?

MEREDITH

What.

GUY

I think you know as well as I do that none of this is happening.

Music stops, we're back in modern-time.

GUY

You come here alone, like you do most Wednesday nights, thinking you'll find some dickhead drunk enough to go home with you, but not too drunk to lose his erection. If he even gets one in the first place. Which rarely happens. Except tonight, when you see me across the room watching you dance. You move to the rooftop bar alone, hoping I will follow you. I do. Nod at you politely. Order a drink from the bartender. "Could I have a whiskey sour?" And you say to me

MEREDITH

"I want to tell you something you haven't heard yet. About the way my body feels when I'm beneath a new man."

GUY

And I get embarrassed. And I walk away. And I get drunk very quickly and pass out in the cab ride back to my apartment while my skinny non-girlfriend gives me head in the back seat. And I will forget about this encounter completely. Except the part where I accidentally brush up against your breasts and think to myself, this chick has a gorgeous rack. And maybe I'll picture myself sucking on your nipple for a split second. But that's it.

MEREDITH

That's not a nice thought. Let's go backwards a few beats. Let's go back to the part where you tell me you like watching me dance.

GUY

I was just watching your ass. Like every other guy here.

MEREDITH

That's a start...

GUY

You have a rip in the back of your dress. Right at the crack.

MEREDITH checks. Sure enough, there's a gaping hole showing off her cotton panties.

GUY exits. MEREDITH turns to the bartender expectantly. The Bartender hands her a giant bowl of salad.

She takes it, then eats with utter glee and joyfulness. She dances the DANCE OF THE SEVEN LETTUCES. Romaine. Frisée. Iceberg. Arugula. Butter. Oak leaf. Baby spinach. It is a loving, passionate homage.

### PART THREE: THE TELEVISION

A TV commercial is projected. WOMEN laugh alone with salad in slow motion.

Slowly, beneath this, a woman's voice, gentle and bright.

FEMALE VOICE (Sandy)

Making healthy choices. Taking care of me. Feeling good. Living good. Healthy and clean. I like that. For me. Because I matter. Loving myself because someone has to. Loving me for living good and eating good. Loving myself. Must. Or at least should. Possibly could if I eat salad. But only salad. Must do what. People tell me. Instead of living. The life I could live. I eat salads. So I'm healthy. Therefore I must be happy. But deep inside. Somehow I'm not. Must eat more salad.

ANOTHER FEMALE VOICE (Meredith)

Possible side effects of laughing alone with salad include nausea, heart palpitations, dizziness while standing, temporary night blindness and compulsive gambling.

THIRD FEMALE VOICE (Tori)

Can we get a "women laughing alone with salad while wearing white and doing cartwheels during their periods"? Ha, just kidding. Hey you know what? I love my lifestyle. And my tank tops. And yogurt. Boo-yah! Suck it.

PRODUCT: Freetex Brand Feminine Hygiene Products.

### PART FOUR: THE CARPET

GUY is passed out on the couch. A crunched up

blanket lies on the floor. Sound of retching, vomiting from off. Water running. TORI emerges in boxers and a man's T-shirt, brushing her teeth loudly.

GUY

Shhhh...

TORI

Sorry.

She exits to spit. Returns. Curles up onto the floor on the blanket. Grabs a magazine. On the back is an advertisement for Branson Community College (BCC), showing a WOMAN LAUGHING ALONE WITH SALAD. Slogan: "Education = Liberation."

TORI

You drank *a lot* last night. You're never this hung over. It's weird.

GUY groans. Sits up. Rubs his head.

It's supposed to get to like, seventy-five today. Spring! Yay. Pink toenails and pastel tank tops. Midnight fro-yo. Riding our bikes around the city like gangstas. Ha! Makes me feel, like, powerful? You know? Like I own something in the world? I dunno.

GUY appraises TORI oddly. Something has changed...

TORI (cont.)

What?

GUY

Nothing.

TORI

I was gonna go smoke on your balcony. You wanna come smoke?

GUY shakes his head.

TORI shakes an empty pack of cigarettes.

TORI

We're out. You want brunch? We could go get brunch.

GUY

Sure.

TORI

There's that place on Avenue B. The one that Kenyatta and his girlfriend always want us to try. They have buckwheat soba pancakes with tofu cream cheese. They also have like fried sesame rice balls? They're like Asian influenced I guess? His girlfriend eats like a caveman but she's Korean so all the fat just melts right off her. They use organic soy sauce. They have dim sum too. And they squeeze their own lichee juice.

GUY

Okay.

He continues to watch her oddly. She senses it, but barrels ahead as though things are normal. Returns to her magazine.

TORI

You know if we lived in LA we'd have an orange tree and I'd squeeze my own orange juice with like a manual press. And I'd wear flip flops every day. Even in the rain. And do yoga, like *serious* yoga, like I'd get my certification. I think I could get my dad to pay for that, right? He paid for my year in Bali and my Vespa. I think he still feels guilty about my step-brother molesting me. Isn't that weird? I barely remember it, but yet I get tons of free shit for the rest of my life.

Beat. She looks at him staring at her.

TORI (cont)

What? Seriously.

GUY shrugs.

TORI (cont)

They have normal food there too. Like bacon and eggs and toast. Should I put on NPR?

GUY

No.

TORI

Okay.

(beat)

I'm so OVER the winters here. Even with all this body fat I freeze to death. In LA I could get a bartender job in a place where celebrities go. I could be like all nonchalant when I serve them drinks. They'll like me 'cause I don't give a fuck. "Mississippi Mudslide, I don't give a fuck." Wanna beer?

GUY

Yes. Thank you.

TORI disappears and returns with a beer. She hands it to him. He grips it but doesn't move.

GUY (cont.)

"Mississippi Mudslide." Sounds like a glass of diarrhea.

TORI

You got the spins?

GUY

Uh-huh.

TORI

Lay down.

He does. TORI lays on top of him and presses her hips into his ass.

GUY

Ow.

TORI

I'm grounding you.

GUY

Ow! Your hipbones. You're a goddamn skeleton.

TORI

I cut out dairy.

GUY sits upright. He drinks his beer.

GUY

I can't goddamn remember anything from last night.

TORI

You broke up with me. In the cab ride home. After I *swallowed your load*.

GUY

Fuck, Tori. You know it makes me uncomfortable when you use porn verbiage.

TORI

"*Verbiage*." Asshole.

She straddles him and they make out a little.

GUY

You taste like puke.

I brushed.

TORI

Brush your TONGUE.

GUY

Sorry.

TORI

She goes to brush her tongue. GUY lights a joint.

Hey. I dig your hair black. With that pale-ass skin. You look like an alien. Ever think about getting bangs? Like, Bettie-page-ish?

GUY

Brushing her tongue.

I could do that. I've been getting checked out *way* more recently. By older men especially. You know as someone who's had periods in her life of feeling totally fucking ignored? It actually feels really good. It's like a little fairy sprinkled some magic dust on me and for like a teeny tiny second I have power.

TORI

She spits, then:

Lights change. GUY freezes.

Kanye West's *Power* begins to blast. Like, really loud.

MEREDITH and SANDY emerge from nowhere dressed like oldschool Flygirls. They cradle riches in their arms and approach TORI.

They mouth the opening lines to the song, and continue throughout.

MEREDITH and SANDY

Aw  
Heey-ay  
Aw  
Heey-ay  
Aw  
Heey-ay  
Heey-ay-ay-ay  
Heey-ay-ay-ay

They continue as TORI mouths the main lyrics to the song, channeling Kanye very convincingly.

TORI

I'm living in the 21st century doin' something mean to it  
Do it better than anybody you ever seen do it  
Screams from the haters, got a nice ring to it  
I guess every superhero need his theme music

The women deliver TORI a scepter, a robe/cape, and a crown while she sings.

TORI

No one man should have all that power  
The clocks tickin' I just count the hours  
Stop trippin' I'm tripping off the power

GUY

(unfreezing for a second)

21st century Schizoid Man

Then the women deliver TORI some bling: huge ropes of chains, ice for her fingers, etc.

TORI

The system broken, the school's closed, the prison's open  
We ain't got nothing to lose motherfucker we rollin',  
Huh? Motherfucker we rollin'  
With some light skinned girls and some Kelly Rowland's  
In this white man's world we the ones chosen  
So goodnight cruel world I'll see you in the mornin',  
Huh? I see you in the mornin'  
This is way too much, I need a moment.

Both women fan TORI with huge feather plumes as she makes her way through the audience.

TORI

No one man should have all that power  
The clocks tickin' I just count the hours  
Stop trippin' I'm tripping off the power  
Till then, fuck that the world's ours

TORI returns to the stage unloading her riches with much fanfare.

TORI

And then they

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And then they  
And then they  
And then they

GUY  
(unfreezing)

21st Century Schizoid Man

TORI

Hooooo.

The girls have disappeared. GUY unfreezes permanently and TORI wiggles in between his legs and takes a hit of his joint.

GUY

Wow, that was weird. Was that Kanye?

TORI

Yeah.

GUY

Huh. Weird. That club kinda blew last night, didn't it?

TORI

Kinda.

GUY

The music? What was that, like, Skrillex?

TORI

Don't hate on dubstep. Makes you sound old.

GUY

I *am* old. Hey. We should go to Paris.

TORI

Why?

GUY

Why not?

TORI

I wanna go to LA.

GUY

Fuck LA.

TORI  
Fuck Paris.

GUY  
Everyone goes to LA. LA *acts* like a sexy place but Paris is the real deal.

TORI  
Everything there is drenched in butter.

GUY  
So what?

TORI  
*Dairy*. I'd starve.

GUY  
You could take those lactard pills. Come on. Let's be decadent. Just for once---

TORI  
Who was that fat chick you were hitting on all night?

GUY  
She wasn't fat.

TORI  
Well-marbled.

GUY  
She had beautiful breasts.

TORI  
Are you *trying* to make me feel insecure?

GUY  
She was the only gal there who looked like she was having a good time.

TORI  
I was having a good time. *You* didn't notice.

GUY  
I was avoiding you. Because when I say stuff like "I need space" you fucking show up to my restaurant like a lost goddamn ferret and beg me to take you out for drinks.

TORI  
Maybe if you stopped breaking up with me in clichés you'd get better results.

GUY  
And maybe if you stopped *being* a cliché I'd hang around you more.

TORI

Don't you have a blog to write? A lonely little blog about how melancholy and romantic it is to be a young feller in the big bad city with an ulcer and a creative writing degree? And how your bitch of a girlfriend won't let you do anal and that makes you even saaaaaaader?

GUY

You let me do anal. Twice.

TORI

Complete accident. Both times. I was too drunk to employ corrective measures.

Beat.

GUY

God. That kind of changes everything.

TORI

Really?

GUY

Kinda. Makes me feel like, rapey.

TORI

Well it was, a little. But like, fun rapey, not like sex-offender rapey.

GUY

But you didn't enjoy it.

TORI

I didn't *despise* it. It's just not my thing.

GUY

*Twice.*

TORI

What's the big deal?

GUY

If I didn't like something you were doing I would ask you to stop.

TORI

But part of you *wanted* me to like it.

GUY

Because some girls do! And you're a little kooky, which is what I dig about you, and I wanna do kooky shit to you that you like, but it's fucked up to act like you like something

when you think I *want* you to like it but you don't *actually* like it.

Beat.

TORI

I'm sorry I let you ass-rape me. It won't happen again--

GUY

And like, how you bring up the fact that you were molested like it's all, "oh, I was just waiting for the bus and I got finger-banged by my brother!"

TORI

*Step*-brother. What does that have to do with ass-rape?

GUY

And how you memorize the entire menu at every goddamn place we go eat but then you order a head of lettuce?? EVERY FUCKING TIME?

TORI

I have food allergies, what is your point?

Beat.

GUY

Nothing.

Beat.

TORI

Oh my god I can't wait to start riding bikes again. That downhill curve off the Manhattan bridge that like peels out into Cadman Plaza and shoots you straight into Dumbo, like right through the doors of every one of our favorite bars? Remember racing the Q train that time? All those sleepy drones on their way home from their awful day jobs? We were like, "Choke on that, playa!"

GUY

Yeah.

Long beat.

I should probably get going. I gotta be at the restaurant by noon.

TORI

It's only ten.

GUY shrugs and takes a hit.

TORI (cont)

We don't have to get brunch. I can make eggs here or something.

GUY

Good luck finding food in my fridge.

TORI

We can order something from that horrible diner that smells like old people. We can eat on your balcony and make fun of all the walk-of-shamers in their cheap sequins and stripper heels...

GUY

And what would you order, Tori?

Small beat.

TORI

Um.

GUY

For breakfast. What food would you order. To eat.

Long beat.

TORI

Anything.

Um.

Eggs benedict.

Um.

Belgian waffle.

Um.

Steel cut oatmeal.

Um.

Apple-smoked bacon.

Um.

Puff pastry.

Um.

Greek omelette.

Um.

Um.

Um.

Iced donut.

Um.

Poppy seed bagel.

Um.

Turkey Sausage.

Um.

Corned beef hash.

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Um.  
Um.  
Um.

Smoked salmon.

Um.  
Um.  
Um.  
Um.  
Um.  
Um.  
Um.  
Um.  
Tofu scramble.  
Um.  
Ham Croissant.  
Um.  
BLT.  
Um.  
Country biscuit.  
Um.  
Breakfast burrito.  
Um.

Um um um um um um umumumumumumum French toast.  
French fucking toast.

GUY

You'll eat French toast.

TORI

I'll eat it. I'll pour goddamn syrup on it and slather it in butter and I'll cut huge triangles with my tiny plastic knife and lay each piece on my tongue and the syrupy juice will spill down my throat and I won't even gag.

GUY

Won't even gag.

TORI

I won't. I'll chew. And swallow. And I'll look at you on your balcony in your thrifted shirt with your stupid hair blowing back even though there's no wind and I will eat the goddamn entire serving of French goddamn toast out of a Styrofoam container with a plastic fucking fork.

Long beat.

GUY

Except you won't.

Beat.

I'm gonna go shower.

GUY exits.

TORI remains behind. Curls her knees into her body. Rocks a little.

TORI

(a whisper)

What's my name

What's my name

Kanye's song plays again. TORI can't move. SANDY and MEREDITH march in, carrying giant bowls of salad. They pelt her with lettuce, covering her body, burying her with it. MEREDITH drags her off.

SANDY appears. She talks on her Blackberry. A nearby lit bus stop sign has a picture of a WOMAN LAUGHING ALONE WITH SALAD and the slogan "She's Waiting For You. HotMatch.com, the Only Dating Site You'll Ever Need."

SANDY

Hi Kristen it's Sandy, listen, I'm stuck in traffic and not gonna be able to make lunch with Barb so could you reschedule and maybe order me a salad from down the street, just some greens with red wine vinegar and some cranberries and celery and four black olives and some cucumber slices and a little cooked broccoli and some red onions. Oh and mushrooms. And a diet coke. And if they have sliced almonds that would be great, sometimes they don't have them. Okay. And could you make sure there's soy milk in the fridge, I checked this morning and there was only skim, okay? Oh, I forgot to ask if Jeremy from Singer Properties called. Great, what did he say. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Great. Perfect.

As she listens, something wet, fleshy, blob-like and glistening with blood drops from between her legs and lands on the floor with a splat.

SANDY (cont.)

Shoot.

SANDY regards it in horror, but not surprise—obviously this has happened before, more than once.

SANDY (cont.)

Okay Kristen listen I'll have to call you back.

She hangs up. Regards the blob. Looks around to see if anyone saw.

SANDY scoops the blob up and tucks it back between her legs. It stays. She looks vaguely relieved.

### PART FIVE: THE RESTAURANT

Three anonymous women sit alone at separate tables, forks and knives in hand, waiting. Lunch rush. A bell rings.

GUY rushes in with a tray. On the tray is a plate with a red pepper. He delivers it to the woman who plays MEREDITH.

GUY

Okay here we have a 46 calorie vegetable with a side of braised nothing and a light city-air dressing, topped with a pile of shaved emptiness. Enjoy.

The woman proceeds to cut up the pepper very very slowly into tiny pieces and eat slow mo. She is in utter ecstasy.

Bell rings, GUY delivers a plate carrying one yellow pepper, delivers it to the woman who plays TORI.

GUY

Okay a locally grown dirt object pulled from the soil and triple washed, with a thin taut skin and a sprinkle of inedible seeds. Dressed with a light coating of oxygen and a non-foam breeze trifle. Delish.

The woman rubs the pepper on her cheeks and gums very slowly. She laughs quietly to herself.

Bell. GUY delivers an onion on a plate to the woman who plays SANDY, who licks her chops

and rubs her hands together.

GUY cuts the onion for her. She smiles.

GUY

This is an onion. It's just a fucking onion. You ordered an onion from a fancy restaurant. Like it's a delicacy. Eat it. As though you've never tasted something so wondrous in your entire life.

She eats a piece. GUY watches them in disdain as they all eat in ecstatic slow mo. He gets on a mike. He speaks in a deep, slow, smooth-jazz voice. Perhaps some R & B or slow-jam hip-hop plays.

GUY

Mmmmmmmmmmm.  
Right  
Yum yum.  
Yummy.  
Oooooooh.  
Uh-huh.  
Yeah.  
Eat it.  
Make it happen, ladies.  
Work.  
Now you got it.  
Go baby.  
Bring it down.  
Mmmm-mmm.  
Keep me waitin'  
Eaaaaasy does it  
Yeah  
Yeah  
Flow with it  
Oh yeah  
Yeah  
Melt in your mouth  
Shawty you feel me  
Don't fight it  
Don't hide it  
Just ride it  
Mmhn.  
Mmhn.  
Do it up  
Do it real  
Tonight  
Begging for it

draft 7/1/13

On your knees  
To the beat  
Eating won't quit  
Jack pot baby  
Do me right  
Ooh-eyoh  
you know it  
you flow it  
don't status-quo it  
Hmmm  
Mmmm  
Mmmm-mmm-mmm-mmm-mmm-mmm-mmm-mmm-mmm-mmm-mmm.

The women finish. Sighs of contentment and relief. Dab their mouths with napkins. Lean back in their chairs. GUY clears their plates.

Beat.

The woman who plays TORI slides her finger down her throat and hurls.

#### PART SIX: UPPER EAST SIDE

SANDY sits on a chair with her hands immersed in a large bucket.

OUT HER WINDOW: A building with a gym on the second floor. Sign in the window has a WOMAN STRUGLING TO DRING WATER and the slogan "Fit 4 Less! 0% down for the month of June!"

GUY appears, agitated. SANDY greets him warmly.

GUY

Hey ma.

SANDY

My beautiful boy.

He kisses her.

GUY

Wanna beer?

He goes to the fridge, gets out a beer.

SANDY

No. Use a coaster please. And don't leave your backpack there. The lady just cleaned. The Monsignor is coming over later—

GUY

Again?

SANDY

--and I don't want the place a disaster. You look like you got run over.

GUY

Work is crazy. They opened up the new dining room and we're getting slammed. And they just added like seven new salads to the menu. All these coiffed ladies with shiny hair refusing to eat a decent meal. Sometimes I just wanna get in their faces and scream "EAT A FUCKING BURGER!"

SANDY

Down a notch please?

GUY

Memorizing all this new shit, it's like I'm studying for the GRE's again.

SANDY

As if you actually studied.

GUY

Fuck grad school. Did Kerouac go to grad school? Did Hemingway?

SANDY

Someday you're gonna wish you studied something practical as a fall-back.

GUY

Like what?

SANDY

Like, I don't know. Marketing. You could be creative there and it might actually support you--

GUY

Only cowards and losers go into marketing. The fuck are you doing?

SANDY

This nutty Mediterranean treatment. Supposed to take years off your hands. They say hands are the true marker of a woman's age.

GUY

draft 7/1/13

Botox stop working?

SANDY

It's *new*. For the *hands*. How's your ulcer?

GUY

Annoying.

SANDY

And the writing?

GUY

Annoying. I'm starving, you're not even dressed. Let's go.

SANDY

I think maybe I'm gonna stay home, honey.

GUY

Whattaya mean, I just took two trains and a cab to get here. I've been looking forward to a sloppy lasagna all week.

SANDY

You go grab some food. I need to stay here. I'm in the middle of my treatment. If I stop now I'll have to start all over again.

GUY

How long does it take?

SANDY

Four to five days.

GUY

How long you been sitting there?

SANDY

Since midnight.

GUY finally peers into the bucket. He is a little surprised. SANDY laughs.

SANDY

They won't hurt you. They never leave the bucket.

GUY

What are they doing?

SANDY

Feeding. They eat all the dead skin off your hands and then some. It doesn't hurt.

GUY

But... your fingers...

SANDY

What about them?

GUY

Where are they?

SANDY

They ate them, honey. I wasn't using them anyway. I never cook anymore, I've forgotten how to drive, I use voice-recognition on my phone... honestly they were a distraction more than anything.

GUY

Mom, that's retarded.

SANDY

No more retarded than the five-hundred other things I've done to my body to keep it fresh and vigorous.

GUY

Get up. Get the fuck up. It's LUNCH TIME. What's wrong with you? GET THE FUCK UP.

SANDY

Also my uterus keeps falling out. I'm better off sitting.

GUY is beside himself. He picks up his phone.  
Presses a button.

GUY (cont.)

(rather formal and too loud)

Call Federici's Pizza.

SIRI (phone V.O.)

*Calling Federici's pizza. Main.*

Long beat. Informal.

GUY

Hey, yeah, delivery, I'd like a sloppy lasagna and a side of meatballs, a liter of coke, a can of diet coke, and a side of greens with red wine vinegar, cranberries, celery, four black olives, cucumber slices, cooked broccoli, some red onions, mushrooms, and sliced almonds. 41 East 86<sup>th</sup> Street apartment 12b. Thanks.

GUY pulls out a cigarette.

GUY (cont.)

Fucking salad. For a bra-burner.

SANDY

Honey, the last bra I burned was the Spring of '74. It was a fad. I outgrew it like everything else.

GUY

What? You were a feminist!

SANDY

So was everyone. Don't smoke in here.

GUY

You let the monsignor smoke indoors.

SANDY

I'm gonna ask an elderly priest with lupus to hobble himself to the elevator every time he wants a cigarette?

GUY

Yes.

SANDY

Why are you so hostile about him?

GUY

He's here ALL THE TIME now. It's creepy.

SANDY

Oh for chrissakes. Have a belt of whisky. You're much nicer to me when you're lubricated.

Sound of a loud-ish chomp, tiny teeth on bone.  
SANDY jumps a little.

SANDY (cont.)

Whooo! Felt that one. Ha!

GUY

I do not approve. Can I say just that? YOUR SON DOES NOT APPROVE.

GUY grabs the whisky, takes a belt.

SANDY

Not too much. It's the monsignor's favorite--

Are you fucking him? GUY (cont)

Don't act like a jealous lover. SANDY

You spend more time with him than me. GUY

He lives in the building, don't be stupid. Aren't you dating anyone? SANDY

Um yeah, kinda. GUY

Who is she? SANDY

Nobody. Just another boney chick who hates herself. GUY

What's her name? SANDY

Tori. Victoria. GUY

What does she do? SANDY

Studies new media at NYU, sorta. Drives a Vespa. Has a very pronounced clavicle. GUY

Are you serious about her? SANDY

I dunno. I like her. I know *you'd* love her. She's got that trophy-thing, like you always talk about. She wants us to move to LA. GUY

Interested? SANDY

Fuck no. GUY

SANDY

draft 7/1/13

Why not? Maybe the change would be good for you. Sunshine, palm trees... all the dope you can smoke...

GUY

It's too far.

SANDY

From what?

Beat.

From me? Aw honey.

Sound of another loud-ish chomp. SANDY jumps, peers into the bucket.

SANDY

Yikes! There goes my left thumb. Sayonara, sucker... heh heh.

SANDY's blackberry rings. Blackberry continues to ring. They both stare at it.

GUY

You gonna get that?

SANDY

No, honey.

GUY

Might be work.

Beat. Neither answer the phone.  
Finally GUY answers the phone.

GUY (cont)

'Lo... oh hey Kristen, s'up.... No she's a little busy at the moment.... Okay hang on, I'll ask.

(to SANDY)

She wants to know when you're coming back to the office.

SANDY

I read a statistic recently that underweight women are more successful in business than women of average weight--

GUY

She's waiting...

draft 7/1/13

Let her wait. I'm busy.

SANDY

Beat.

GUY  
(into the phone)

Hey Kristen she'll call you back.

He hangs up.

GUY (cont.)

You're being a dick.

SANDY laughs.

GUY (cont)

It's not a fucking joke.

SANDY

Everything's a joke.

GUY

Was dad leaving a joke?

SANDY

What is with you today?

GUY

I'm just pissed, okay?

SANDY

At what?

GUY

At what? At everything. At my girlfriend. At you. At myself.

SANDY  
(surprisingly gentle)

What's on your mind baby?

GUY says nothing.

SANDY (cont)

Something you can't talk to me about?

GUY

I don't know. Yeah.

SANDY

Why not try?

Longish beat.

GUY lights up his cigarette. She lets him.

GUY

Okay fine.

You um.

Before dad left.

Um you, your assistant, Brian?

SANDY

Yes.

GUY

He always knew what presents to get me. I mean you told him what to buy but he always got like the best versions of them. Like that skateboard for my fifteenth birthday, he got me the Tony Hawk one from the poster on my wall.

SANDY

He was thoughtful like that.

GUY

Yeah.

Um.

I knew he was in love with you of course, everyone was, but I sensed something else... you were fucking, I don't know how I knew, and it was confirmed when I... saw, um, one night, it was like 3am, I got up to get a glass of water, he was going down on you in the kitchen, you had your back pressed against the sink and he was on his knees beneath your nightgown, I recognized his Converse hi-tops, at first I thought he was adjusting your hem, but I watched long enough to see you come, which was horrible, and then I went back to bed and jerked off, which was equally horrible, and then I threw up.

And um like the next week he was organizing some files in your office while you were at work, and I walked in and closed the door behind me and he was like hey dude, what's up, and I held out a baggie of coke and asked him to blow me.

Beat.

SANDY

Did he?

GUY

draft 7/1/13

Yeah.

SANDY

Where?

GUY

On your stepladder. I sat on the high rung with my pants at my ankles.

SANDY

Did he snort the coke?

GUY

*That's* what you want to know?

SANDY

He was a clean kid. I'd be surprised.

GUY

Yeah, he snorted it.

SANDY

Before or after?

GUY

After. We did a few key hits together. Then I blew him. I wasn't good at it. He kept telling me to go slower, to grab his hips. Then he told me he had to finish working, so I left the room and brushed my teeth and went to school.

Beat.

SANDY

Did you tell anyone?

GUY

No.

Another beat.

SANDY

You didn't do that with any of the others...

GUY

No. I mean not your lovers. I fucked a few of your assistants.

SANDY

Who?

GUY

Um Elisabeth. Kerry. Kristen.

SANDY

You slept with *Kristen*?? She's so tacky!

GUY

She's not a bad girl beneath the highlights and spray tan--

SANDY

And the pointy shoes and the lip gloss, texting and getting manicures and starving herself--

GUY

Are you kidding? She's *exactly* the kind of girl you always tell me I should date!

SANDY

Date, yes! Fool around with behind my back, no! I hired her so she represents me out there / in the world

GUY

See, this is why I didn't tell you. You always make it about you.

SANDY

It *is* about me. These are *my* people--

GUY

We made a video. Kristen and me. It's on Youporn. You can't see our faces. Just our bodies. And my apartment. And the bedspread you gave me.

SANDY

As telling me you coerced my lover to suck you off isn't enough humiliation--

GUY

If you had known about it at the time it might have been enough! But I guess you were too busy working twelve hours a day and taking night classes and spending hours in the bathroom puking up your meals. And hey, maybe you shouldn't have *had* a lover while you were still married to dad.

SANDY

(savage)

Don't act like you know anything about my marriage.

GUY

Don't act like you don't enjoy being called a whore.

Suddenly, a LOUD CHOMP echoes in the room.  
SANDY screams in pain.

SANDY

draft 7/1/13

FUUUUUCK!

This also echoes forever, and much larger than it should. GUY freezes, unhearing.

Lights change.

SANDY and GUY are now out of time. SANDY pulls from the bucket an ENORMOUS SLICE OF CAKE. Her hands are bloody and her fingers are stumps.

She begins to eat the cake without utensils, just her face.

GUY throws on a necktie and a fake moustache.

GUY

You're so good with the baby, honey.

SANDY

Thank you.

GUY

You're a natural.

SANDY

I am.

GUY

He resembles you more than me.

SANDY

He does.

GUY

You look terrific with all that extra weight on you.

SANDY

I do.

GUY

I'll bet it's nice not to have to worry about your waistline any more.

SANDY

Sure is.

GUY

draft 7/1/13

Nice to dissolve like a cube of sugar into the warm, milky tea of motherhood.

SANDY

Absolutely.

GUY

You were getting tired of the grind anyway.

SANDY

I was.

GUY

Tired of waking up an hour early every morning just to make yourself look fuckable.

SANDY

True.

GUY

Tired of talking like a fella, acting like a fella.

SANDY

I was.

GUY

Of having to work super hard for titles you're overqualified for.

SANDY

Completely.

GUY

It's not natural.

SANDY

It isn't.

GUY

You were meant to lose your looks at 30.

SANDY

I was.

GUY

And your feminine power.

SANDY

Indeed.

GUY

draft 7/1/13

As I become more distinguished and formidable and robust with age.

SANDY

It's true.

GUY

Now you can "have it all."

SANDY

I can.

GUY

A baby you adore, a clan of mommy friends who aren't intimidated by you...

SANDY

Yes.

GUY

A part-time job when you're ready for it, to make you feel relevant...

SANDY

Yes

GUY

AND... a husband who feels safe with you here, all swaddled in your maternal envelope.

SANDY

Finally.

GUY

You are an amazing woman, honey. YOU REALLY ARE. With your big breasts leaking milk and your gut all floppy like a freezer bag. So brave.

SANDY

I made the choice to stay home with my baby. It's my right. As a woman.

GUY

Women's rights. It's what you fought for in the 70's.

SANDY

It is.

GUY

Now I must go gallivant around town with the next young thing who bends provocatively over my wastebasket.

SANDY

Have fun.

Love you baby.

GUY

You too.

SANDY

GUY removes the moustache and the tie, freezes.

SANDY stares at the rest of the cake.

Lights change back.

God what a prick!

GUY

He was a powerful, successful man. It's not like I didn't know what I was getting into when I married him. *I* was the one who changed. He was just doing what was expected of him. You could stand to take a lesson from that.

SANDY

You have cake all over your face.

GUY

Beat.

I know.

SANDY

How you gonna wipe it off?

GUY

I don't know.

SANDY

Or shower? Or feed yourself?

GUY

I don't know.

SANDY

You hadn't considered that?

GUY

I just figured---

SANDY

GUY

draft 7/1/13

What? That I'd do it? Or the *monsignor*?

SANDY

No....

GUY

Then who.

SANDY

I, I'm sorry.

GUY

It's your body. Though you *are* kinda spending half my inheritance on your lunatic beauty treatments, which isn't cool--

SANDY

No... I'm sorry for...

GUY

Uh-oh, is this a Big Apology or a Little One?

SANDY

...for making you feel... diminished.

Longish beat.

GUY

Don't. Fucking. Apologize.

(beat)

I'm gonna go wait for the food.

He exits.

SANDY stares at the rest of the cake.

And stares.

## PART SEVEN: WOMEN BUYING STUFF

Changing room.

MEREDITH enters with a stack of shapewear and some retro dresses. Relieved no one is there. Takes off her clothes and begins uncomfortably packing herself into some waaaay too small spandex shapers. Goes on a while. Looks tortuous and

comical.

Finally, SANDY enters with a pile of pretty flowered dresses. She strips down and attempts to change. But she has no fingers, only bandages, so it's difficult.

They smile politely at one another. We hear their thoughts, or see them projected. MEREDITH eyes SANDY's hand-stumps.

MEREDITH

She's had some work done. Cheaply.

SANDY

One size up, Chubby. You're fooling no one.

SANDY's uterus falls out again. She tries to tuck it back in, but again, with no fingers it's difficult.

MEREDITH

Gross. God it sucks to be old.

SANDY

Stop looking at my guts you little tub of shit. You don't see me staring at your giant sloppy rack.

SANDY jams her uterus into her purse.

TORI enters. She's loaded down with yoga clothes.

SANDY

Ugh. Yoga bitch.

MEREDITH

Bulimic.

TORI

Oh awesome. A cake eater and a granny. People I look hot next to when I'm naked.

TORI strips down to her underwear. The other women struggle with their garments. The women watch her from the corners of their eyes.

SANDY

Psycho.

Butt plug. MEREDITH

Anorexic. SANDY

'Ho. MEREDITH

Ferret. SANDY

Drug addict. MEREDITH

TORI turns to them in her new yoga ensemble.

TORI  
(to the women)  
Sorry, have to ask... Does this make me look fat?

Oh God no-- SANDY

You're so tiny-- MEREDITH

You're a pin-- SANDY

You look fab! MEREDITH

Are you a model? SANDY

Ha! No. I'm so bloated. I just ate a HUGE breakfast. A whole grape. TORI

You can't tell-- MEREDITH

Not at all— SANDY

You're made of air-- MEREDITH

draft 7/1/13

SANDY

You're invisible.

TORI

Thank you SO much. SO sweet.

Beat. To SANDY.

Go find some fucking fingers.

SANDY exits with her clothes. TORI and MEREDITH eye each other.

TORI

Slut--

MEREDTH

Bitch--

TORI

Cunt--

MEREDTH

Whore--

TORI

Cow--

MEREDTH

Slag--

TORI

Skank--

MEREDTH

Dog—

TORI

Tart--

MEREDTH

Hag—

TORI

Shrew--

MEREDTH

draft 7/1/13

Succubus—

TORI

Cum-dump. CUM-DUMP. FISH-LIPS. WHALE COCK. STEAMING DICK-TURD.  
WALRUS PLUG. APPLE SACK. MUD-BUTT. LIZARD-STICK. PUSS-BAG.  
PORK-GUT.

That dress looks awesome on you.

MEREDITH

Yeah?

TORI

So pretty.

MEREDITH

Thanks. I'm gonna wear it tonight when I fuck your boyfriend. On your carpet. While you watch.

TORI

Cool.

MEREDITH

Take care.

MEREDITH exits with her clothes.

TORI immediately poses in her yoga gear like the laughing salad ladies we've seen in all the advertisements. She stays eerily frozen. Lights and music screech around her, but she stays frozen in mid-laugh.

#### PART EIGHT: ROOFTOP BAR, AGAIN

MEREDITH is dancing awesomely, by herself, in her new dress. GUY shows up.

He spots MEREDITH. Watches her for a while. Approaches.

IN THE BACKGROUND—billboard advertising “OMNI Wireless Service.” Photo of a WOMAN STRUGGLING TO DRINK WATER image and the slogan “One Month of Free Wifi. So refreshing.” OMNI Wireless logo.

GUY

draft 7/1/13

“Bite me”.

Beat.

Oh. Hi.

MEREDITH

Continues dancing.

I was hoping you'd / be here

GUY

Shut the fuck up.

MEREDITH

Hey. Fun. Nice to see you too.

GUY

Where's your not-a-girlfriend?

MEREDITH

Home.

GUY

MEREDITH continues dancing coldly. Ignores him.

Can I buy you a drink?

GUY (cont)

She shakes a bottle of sport water to show she is all beveraged up.

Not boozing tonight, huh.

GUY (cont)

Shakes her head no.

Not even strapped to your thigh?

GUY (cont)

Shakes her head no.

Cool. Hey, is this Skrillex?

GUY (cont.)

She ignores him.

Are you punishing me?

MEREDITH

Nope.

GUY

I was at my mom's. I went downstairs to wait for the delivery guy. But he wasn't there. So I kept walking. I walked all the way home. And then walked all the way here.

Then.

I don't meet girls like you very often.

Beat.

Can I watch you?

MEREDITH

I don't give a shit what you do.

He watches her dance. She very clearly gives a shit what he does, as evidenced by the way she is dancing.

GUY

I've had a strange week. My mom—

MEREDITH

I don't want to hear about your fucking mother--

GUY

My mom, my mom has this priest friend, she's known him since they were kids, he was gorgeous in his youth, they used to call him "Father What-a-Waste," he can't feel his feet now, he walks with a cane and has trouble getting out of chairs, he visits her three nights a week since her uterus started falling out--

MEREDITH

What? Is she sick?

GUY

No. Aging. And uh, she's fighting it, the aging, and fighting it, and fighting it. That woman—she *marched on Washington*. Now she has no fingers and keeps a sick old man around to make her feel like the woman she used to be. Or could have been. And I look at her and see the things she wants for me, and I see what she's become, and they look like the same thing, which terrifies me....

MEREDITH

draft 7/1/13

What's your point.

GUY

My point is.... I've been thinking about you. A lot. I wait until my girlfriend falls asleep and then jerk off to the idea of you writhing on my couch smeared in chocolate frosting.

MEREDITH

Um okay.

GUY

I'm just being honest.

MEREDITH

Why not.

GUY

You'd think FAR less of me if I hadn't had like sort of kinky fantasies about you--

MEREDITH

You must think I'm an idiot.

GUY

Why?

MEREDITH

You must! Seriously? I mean I might like, *project* I have no self-respect because I like to be in close proximity to sexy people, but that doesn't mean I'm literally *inviting* people to shit on me.

GUY

What?

MEREDITH

Chocolate frosting?

GUY

Jesus, it's not a scat fantasy! It's a cake fantasy!

MEREDITH

I mean you, here. Pretending to be into me.

GUY

I'm not pretending--

MEREDITH

Of course you are. Watch. I'll say something provocative, you'll get embarrassed and walk away, pass out in the cab ride back to your apartment where your non-girlfriend is waiting to give you head--

GUY

Not this time--

MEREDITH

I took you to Paris in the twenties and you acted like I barfed on your shoes. I'm bigger than I look, you piece of shit. Bigger than the walls, the lights, your ego. I will eat you alive.

GUY

Hey. You talk big, girlie. But I bet you've probably only banged seven or eight dudes in your life. And you liked it a lot more than you expected. Which made you feel shame.

MEREDITH stops dancing.

GUY (cont.)

And you spend a lot of your time managing that shame, like it's a constant running conversation in your head. And the only time you don't think about it is when you're banging or eating.

MEREDITH

Fuck you--

GUY

SO, you, you like, you overfill the space around you. On purpose. And it's confusing! It confuses me too. But it's okay. It's okay to want things that maybe aren't good for you. Like me. I'm bad for you. For *sure*. Bad for your self-esteem, bad for your closeted puritanical streak. But you want me anyway.

Beat.

You shouldn't ever feel shame about the things you want. Not while you're wanting them, not after you get them... and like, not now.

Beat. MEREDITH glances at the billboard in the distance. She bursts into laughter.

MEREDITH

Hahahahahhhahahhah

GUY

What? What's so funny?

MEREDITH

Salad! Salad is so fucking funny!!!

GUY

Hahahhhahhhahahaha

Right? MEREDITH

Hahahhhahhhahaha GUY

Are you laughing about salad? MEREDITH

No, I'm laughing about steak. Hahahhhah. And beer. Hahahahha! And cars. GUY

Oh my god, what else can we laugh about? Lip gloss? Tank tops? MEREDITH

Soccer cleats! Goatees! Axe body spray!! GUY

Shopping bags! Barbies! Dogs that spill red wine on beige carpets! MEREDITH

They both keel over laughing. GUY stops laughing first, abruptly. He grabs MEREDITH and kisses her very passionately. She kisses back. It gets nasty.

Are you sure— MEREDITH

Yeah— GUY

Okay— MEREDITH

Alley basement bathroom sun— GUY

Carpet. Yours. MEREDITH

Beat.

Okay. GUY

MEREDITH turns to grab her purse. She sees

the ad with the WOMAN STRUGGLING TO  
DRINK WATER.

MEREDITH

One sec.

MEREDITH grabs her bottle of water, opens her  
mouth, and squeezes a stream of water into her  
eye, then onto each breast.

MEREDITH (cont.)

Let's go.

PART NINE: THE CARPET, AGAIN

TORI is doing yoga on the floor of the  
apartment.

MEREDITH and GUY enter. GUY's arm is  
slung around MEREDITH and they're making  
out. MEREDITH still clutches her water bottle.  
TORI stops yoga-ing.

GUY

Hey.

TORI

Hey.

They wipe their mouths sheepishly. Beat.

GUY

Tori, this is Meredith.

TORI

I remember her.

MEREDITH

Hi.

TORI

Nice bangs.

MEREDITH

Thanks.

Beat.

GUY

Meredith is a dancer. Tori is a student. She has a vespa.

TORI

You brought her here to have sex?

GUY

Yeah. That cool?

TORI

Sure.

GUY

Positive? Because, you know--

TORI

No problem. I can go to a movie or something--

GUY

Don't leave. Hang out a little.

TORI

Nah.

GUY

Seriously, Tori. We want you here.

TORI

You sure?

GUY

Positive. Meredith said she wants to make you come.

MEREDITH

I did?

GUY

At the club? That first night? You said you wanted to make her come louder and harder than I ever could. And shove her up you ass without lube.

MEREDITH

Oh yeah.

GUY

Unless...

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MEREDITH

No, no, I do. It's cool. I'm down.

GUY

You sure?

MEREDITH

Yeah.

GUY

Cool. What say, Tors?

TORI is hesitant.

Because I don't wanna make you do something you don't wanna do.

TORI

I know.

GUY

And you've never had a problem with this sorta thing before...

TORI

I know.

GUY

So? Look, if you feel weird we could, I could. I could maybe fire up with Meredith in the bedroom, and you could pop in later... oorrriiii, maybe you gals could, you know. Game it on the couch for a bit, and I could watch... your call, Tors.

Beat. TORI can't decide what to do.

GUY (cont.)

Tell you what. Let's chill. Smoke a bowl, put on some tunes, jam a little. We're all on the same team here. Who needs a drink? I got vodka in the freezer...

Beat. No one makes a move. Uncomfortable.

GUY (cont.)

Or we could order nachos and watch *Arrested Development* on Netflix. Whatevs. No presh.

MEREDITH

Fuck it.

MEREDITH walks over to TORI and kisses her aggressively. GUY is relieved.

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GUY

Okay! Cool.

Lights change. The girls rip off their clothes and GUY drops his pants. Series of very porny threesome poses set to some porny track. All poses are waaay over-the-top, and feature the typical awkward, uncomfortable angles of people posing for a camera pretending to enjoy themselves. MEREDITH appears to be genuinely unleashed. TORI makes sure she looks like she's into it.

This goes on for a while. At least twelve extended poses, some quite acrobatic, with requisite moaning. The entire scenario ends with GUY squirting water from MEREDITH'S bottle into MEREDITH's eye and TORI's chin.

Then, lights change back. All three sit crumpled on the carpet. GUY packs a bong.

GUY

Needed that. Whooo.

The girls kind of nod. TORI is perfectly composed. MEREDITH is disheveled and shellshocked.

GUY (cont. to Meredith)

You see my guitar?

MEREDITH

No.

GUY

Vintage 1972 Gibson Les Paul Deluxe Goldtop. Gonna learn how to play the fucker one of these days.

He takes a big hit. Holds the smoke in.

GUY (cont)

And those notebooks? Moleskin. Like Hemingway. Jot down thoughts for my novel.

TORI

They're empty.

GUY

They're new. I have others.

Releases his smoke. Offers the bong to MEREDITH. She refuses. TORI accepts.

Everyone okay?  
GUY (cont)

TORI nods happily. MEREDITH nods sheepishly.

Good.  
GUY (cont.)

GUY looks to MEREDITH, confused. She's like a different person. Timid, small. What the fuck just happened?

Big awkward beat.

Um, I'm gonna go get a beer. Anyone want anything?  
GUY

I'm good with water.  
TORI

If you have some salad, that would be great.  
MEREDITH  
(quietly)

What?  
GUY

Salad. Please.s  
MEREDITH

Um. I'll check.  
GUY  
(small beat, then)

GUY disappears. Beat. TORI lights up a cigarette.

Well. You certainly looked like you were having fun...  
TORI

MEREDITH says nothing. She dresses, super-self-conscious.

TORI stares at her, appraising her body roughly.

TORI remains in her underwear.

TORI (cont.)

I seriously don't know how you do it.

MEREDITH

Do what?

TORI

Enjoy yourself like that when there's so much of you.

MEREDITH

Um...

TORI

I mean I dig sex. Don't get me wrong. But you were like, on a different planet. All sloppy and loud and aggressive. It's like you have no idea what you look like. What's your secret?

MEREDITH doesn't answer. She finishes dressing and scrunches up into a ball.

TORI (cont.)

Don't be embarrassed. It's like, awesome to not care about what you look like. I don't know too many girls like that. I don't know too many girls, actually. Most of my friends are guys. I don't understand girls and their dramas. I think it's 'cause they're jealous of me. Though I hate saying that, it's dismissive and lazy.

MEREDITH

Um.

TORI

I don't want to be dismissive of you. I want to understand why he brought you here. It can't just be your huge tits. He doesn't like big girls. I mean he's never brought one home before--

MEREDITH

Maybe he was afraid of enjoying it too much.

TORI

Ha!

MEREDITH

Or of risking his social status by indulging in an *actual* person who isn't terrified of living--

TORI

You're not terrified? Look at you.

MEREDITH

I'm just cold—

TORI

You're literally *ashamed!* That's so sad! Maybe this kind of thing isn't for you. Maybe you need a more constructive outlet for your aggression. Why not play a sport, or go to therapy, or take a spin class--

MEREDITH

You're not my competition, honey. So don't act like it. Guys want to be seen in public with you. But they wanna fuck me.

TORI

Aw, congrats. But I'd rather be seen.

The sky rumbles a bit. Both women look up.

GUY returns with a large bowl of salad for MEREDITH and some dressing.

GUY

Dressing?

MEREDITH

No thank you. This looks delicious. Yum.

MEREDITH holds a forkful of salad to her mouth but does not eat. GUY is uncomfortable. He appraises MEREDITH.

GUY

You know I have some other shit in the fridge. Leftovers. French toast. Syrup.

MEREDITH

No thanks. This is great.

MEREDITH continues to hold the fork of salad near her face. Her hand begins to tremble.

GUY

Seriously. You don't have to eat that if you don't want.

MEREDITH

Of course I want.  
I love salad, obviously.

TORI giggles.

GUY  
What's funny?  
TORI  
Nothing. You.  
GUY  
Why? 'Cause I brought home a real woman for once?

TORI  
Oh, is that what she is?

GUY  
(to Meredith)  
Just drop it. No one cares.

MEREDITH  
I care.

GUY  
I'm looking at you and you can't eat it. So drop it--

MEREDITH  
I LOVE SALAD. Sometimes when I eat salad I'm like, *fuck yeah*. I can feel the lettuce leaves sweeping all the toxins straight into my colon. I love lettuce. I love carrots. I love tomatoes. I don't even need dressing. Just a tiny squeeze of lemon. And some cracked black pepper. Ha ha ha ha just the thought of cracked black pepper makes me giggle. Hee hee hee--

GUY  
Then eat it.

She puts the fork in her mouth and chews. She looks delighted. GUY looks nauseated. TORI smiles.

TORI  
How is it?

MEREDITH  
I'll be honest with you. It's the best fucking salad I've ever eaten.

TORI giggles.

MEREDITH (cont.)  
I'm serious. I'm really into this salad. It's primo.

TORI  
(to GUY)

And you thought she was different just 'cause she's a size twelve.

MEREDITH

I'm an eight.

The sky rumbles a bit more. GUY is sort of crushed.  
He's watching her eat the salad in disbelief.

GUY  
(to Meredith, ignoring the sky)

Un-fucking believable.

MEREDITH

Okay a ten, Jesus.

GUY

What is your deal, girlie? Seriously.

MEREDITH

Um that's a broad question--

GUY

You just, you do everything and enjoy nothing? Huh? Is that nice for you? Pretending to be something you're not?

MEREDITH

She does it too!

GUY

I expect it of her. But not you.

MEREDITH

You don't know me. I'm... I *am* enjoying / it

GUY

You are full of shit. You are both full of shit.

TORI

Me? What did I do?

MEREDITH  
(small beat)

I'm sorry—

GUY

DON'T FUCKING APOLOGIZE! Jesus Christ I am so sick of that!

TORI approaches GUY.

TORI

Baby, I love you—

GUY

No, Tori. You don't. Because if you did, you wouldn't hate yourself so much.

MEREDITH

I'm sorry--

GUY

Get out. Both of you.

TORI

(panicking)

I take my coffee black, I dye my hair black, I drink wild turkey, all because of you!!  
I do everything for you—

GUY

Get out!

GUY pushes TORI away. The sky rumbles again, louder than ever. It is terrifying. All look up.

Then, three tons of lettuce drop from the sky, landing with an enormous, terrifying THUD on the ground and the women.

GUY backs away, frightened.

TORI and MEREDITH turn into animals. They attack each other mercilessly with salad, forcing one another to eat. It is a vicious battle. Goes on for a while.

Finally, they both suffocate on the salad and die.

GUY observes them. Checks their pulses. Pulls wet lettuce from their mouths. He is heartbroken, in grief. Maybe he cries a little.

SANDY appears, her hands still in bandages. Approaches GUY. GUY holds his arms out to be held.

GUY

Momma--

SANDY punches him hard in the face with a stump.  
It hurts them both.

SANDY

You should have gone with the skinny one.

She exits, leaving GUY alone with the two dead  
girls and piles of lettuce.

## **END OF ACT ONE**

## **ACT TWO**

### **PART TEN: THE CONFERENCE ROOM**

Long table. Fluorescent lights. Water bottles.  
Folders. PowerPoint presentation screen. A  
WOMAN LAUGHING ALONE WITH SALAD on  
the screen, next to a WOMAN STRUGGLING TO  
DRINK WATER. Beneath both images, the slogan  
“Effervatol. You. Are. Here.” Effervatol logo.

Long beat.

JOE enters, who is now a man played by the woman  
who played TORI. He checks his computer. Turns  
off the slide. Turns up the lights. Sits. Checks his  
phone for messages. Fidgets. Places some pads  
around the table with pencils. Sits again. Applies  
lip balm. Eats some gum. Spits it out because it’s  
gross. Chews loudly on a breath mint.

Several moments later, BRUCE comes in, now a  
dude played by the woman who played  
MEREDITH.

BRUCE

Joe! Hey man, how’s it going?

JOE

Bruce, what up, bro?

They do a bro handshake. Elaborate.

BRUCE

I'm pumped. I am pumped. Ya nervous?

JOE

Nope. Projector's up. Graphics are tight. I think we nailed it.

BRUCE

Nailed it! He's gonna fucking cream himself.

JOE

And now *that* image is in my head.

BRUCE

As if it wasn't already.

JOE

Yikes!

BRUCE

Zing!

JOE

Two points!

BRUCE

Saaa-wish!

They high-five.

BRUCE (cont.)

Hey, catch the game last night?

JOE

Are you kidding? Motherfucker drained a buzzer-beating three-pointer and knocked those suckers right out of first. Suh-WEEEEEEET.

BRUCE

Man what a swish, right? That kid is smooth as silk.

JOE

That kind of talent?

BRUCE

Fucker was born to move. Physically, he's like, an education. A formal education in the fluidity of the human form.

JOE

Well said.

BRUCE

I appreciate aptitude. Freshman year we had this dude on our team? Sick mother fucker. Six foot three? Super-cut? Acrobatic? They called him “The Candle.”

JOE

“The Candle”?

BRUCE

Yeah, man. Fuckler bleached his hair white and dyed the tips orange. Gelled that shit straight up. Added a foot to him. And he was Indian.

JOE

Like Native American, or—

BRUCE

No, like Tech Supporty. Scary as shit. Said like three words the whole season. Made everyone piss themselves. A wonder to behold. Like the Greeks. In Grecian times.

JOE

Peak physical form, is... you know?

BRUCE

I know. And you’re like, wait a minute. I have a body too. I could do that. If I trained.

JOE

There’s no fuckin’ way you could do that. Or me.

BRUCE

If you trained. Yes you could.

JOE

Okay what kind of training are we talking about?

BRUCE

Um rigorous?

JOE

No.

BRUCE

Daily rigorous training. Mind over matter. You’re the master of your own physique.

JOE

(re: Two’s gut)

Who is? You?

BRUCE

Hey this is a choice.

JOE

Dude, all you really need is like, two hours per week of kettlebell swings.

BRUCE

Bullshit.

JOE

Yeah. Look.

JOE makes a muscle.

BRUCE

Shut the fuck up. That's from two hours a week?

JOE

For real. It's called the ACE method. Adherence, consistency, and efficientness.

BRUCE

Where'd you read about that?

JOE

It's everywhere. Look it up.

BRUCE

I will do that.

Longish beat.

BRUCE (cont)

Did he say he was gonna be late?

JOE

Um, Andrew sent an email around... the strategic planning thing is running over.

BRUCE

Oh. I didn't get that email.

JOE

He just sent it like a minute ago. You were probably on your way over.

BRUCE

Oh.

BRUCE checks his phone.

Yup. There it is. Cool.

BRUCE (cont.)

Longish beat.

The men stand and begin to air-box one another casually.

Dude. You smell like smoke.

BRUCE (cont.)

No I don't.

JOE

You do. You completely do.

BRUCE

Nah, man. I used Listerine.

JOE

Your clothes, bro.

BRUCE

You can't smell them from there.

JOE

I can, I totally can smell them from here.

BRUCE

Really? Fuck.

JOE

Thought you quit.

BRUCE

So did I. Think I need to face the fact I might actually be addicted.

JOE

You should get those electronic cigarettes. You suck on them and you still get your nic fix without dragging fire into your lungs.

BRUCE

But I like watching the smoke leave my mouth. Makes me feel powerful.

JOE

Dude that's weird.

BRUCE

JOE

I dunno. It's kinda like, fuck you, world, I know it's hurting me, and may even be hurting you too, but I don't care. YOLO.

BRUCE

"YOLO?"

JOE

"You Only Live Once?"

BRUCE

Ha. I'm old.

JOE

Ha. You fat old fuck.

BRUCE

Hey. I'd rather die choking on a maple bourbon smoked pork belly than a pair of black rotting lungs.

JOE

Choose your poison. We all perish in the end.

BRUCE

Decadence or bust. That's my jam.

JOE

Mine is smokes and my motorcycle. I love that fucking bike. I've had it for three weeks and I can't stop thinking about it. Sometimes I'll park it on the street, then sit on my stoop and watch people check it out. All the hairy dudes want to touch it.

BRUCE

Cool. Cool.

They stop air-boxing.

Longish beat. They sit. Check their phones.

JOE

Andrew says two more minutes.

BRUCE

That means five.

JOE

Natch.

The men drop to the floor and start doing pushups, sit-ups, plank-punches, and other floor/wall exercises casually. Maybe they lift stuff.

JOE (cont.)

So do you like beer?

BRUCE

Love beer, yeah. I'm a beer guy. Old school.

JOE

What kind of beer would you recommend for a non-beer drinker?

BRUCE

You wanna get into the brew?

JOE

Yeah. I'm thinking I'd like to have a hobby besides kettlebells and my bike.

BRUCE

I mean would you be down with some deeply complex oakey reds, or like a barrel aged stout?

JOE

Um...

BRUCE

Or maybe something lighter and hoppier, like an IPA or a barleywine?

JOE

God I have no idea.

BRUCE

Tell you what. Belgians are a good place to start. It's a diverse host of styles—

JOE

Sure, sure—

BRUCE

--but maybe start by trying a Chimay Blue or Chimay Red. They're more alcoholic than average beers, and they drink more like a complex red wine than what you probably think of as "beer."

JOE

Okay—

BRUCE

I mean we're not talking pound-a-six-pack-watching-CSI kinda thing—

JOE

No no. I want to cultivate a palate.

BRUCE

Okay cool, cause that's a good start. And those are good for this time of year too. In warmer weather I'd recommend an American-style wheat beer, with like a gentle fruitiness and low hops.

JOE

Sweet.

BRUCE

And stay away from brews described as "malty". They start to taste like cereal, which is—

JOE

Not good, yeah.

BRUCE

I mean some people like that. It's a strong taste.

JOE

Sure.

BRUCE

But to each his own.

JOE

Cool, thanks bro.

BRUCE

Any time, bro.

Longish beat. They check their phones.

JOE

He's on his way.

BRUCE

Cool.

The men start jerking themselves off casually. They find props around—porn mags, pillows, vacuum-cleaner hose, ladies underwear, etc. They use these.

BRUCE (cont.)

I sent Caroline to the Starbucks this morning.

JOE

Not Dunkins?

BRUCE

Nah.

JOE

But that's like, five extra blocks.

BRUCE

I know. I was in the mood to mess with her a little.

JOE

You're such a dick.

BRUCE

Look, no one told her to wear that tiny fucking skirt in the dead of winter. Serves her right for dressing inappropriately. I mean seriously.

JOE

Why do chicks do that to themselves?

BRUCE

Beats me.

JOE

Self-loathing, or—

BRUCE

Yeah. They're like, socialized to value appearance over comfort. Meanwhile who gives a fuck?

JOE

Not me.

BRUCE

I mean come on. Wake up and smell the reverse-misogyny. It's modern times. No one needs to look at your tits. We've seen tits before. We need to look at your *brains*.

JOE

Seriously. I don't know one dude on this planet who'd kick a girl out of bed for not being a size zero, or not shaving her muff, or not having perfectly plucked eyebrows.

BRUCE

It's so they can get naked in a dressing room and have the other girls hate on them.

JOE

I know, right? They're all starving for perfection and being total assholes to one another-

BRUCE

*And*, being assholes to *themselves* too! Which is the worst part. "I'm stupid, I'm fat, I'm gross." Shut the fuck up. I'm sick of it. Have some self-respect.

JOE

Exactly. For once I just want to be honest. "Yes, you look like a 45-year-old mother of three in those jeans. But it's okay! You're still a worthwhile human! Just lay off salty foods for a week."

BRUCE

"You're stuffing your face with Snackwells, which is like—"

JOE

I *hate* Snackwells—

BRUCE

Oh they're horrible. They taste like chocolate covered monkey dick. I'm like, don't eat seventeen low-fat cookies and then bitch about the size of your ass. Eat ONE cookie, and make it a good one, and feel okay about it after. For fuck's sake.

JOE

Seriously.

BRUCE

I mean...

JOE

Seriously.

They stop masturbating.

Longish beat. BRUCE squirts some hand sanitizer into JOE's hands.

JOE (cont.)

Thanks, bro.

BRUCE

Any time bro.

BRUCE squirts some into his own hand. They rub their hands together a while.

BRUCE then applies lip balm. Offers some to JOE. JOE refuses.

Finally, GUY comes in the door, played by the woman who played SANDY.

Sorry I'm / late

GUY

No worries.

BRUCE

We were just bro-ing out.

JOE

GUY situates himself at the end of the table, the place of power.

Everyone have a good weekend?

GUY

S'alright. Played poker with my drinking buddies. Lost like three hundy.

BRUCE

Ouch.

GUY

Yeah, I'm not very good at it. But I'm addicted to the rush. Keep me away from Vegas, man.

BRUCE

No doubt.

GUY

And, I got some new ink.

BRUCE

Sweet. Where at?

GUY

Right below my heart. It's in Hindi. "Let them hate... as long as they fear."

BRUCE

Bold choice.

JOE

I dig it.

BRUCE

You got any tattoos?

(to Guy)

GUY  
(slightly ashamed)

One. I have a skull right above my pubic bone. Got it when I was fifteen.

BRUCE

Sweet.

GUY

(to Joe)

And how was your weekend?

JOE

I went fishing with my dad over in Port Washington. He's got a little place there.

GUY

Catch anything?

JOE

A bluefish. Couple rainbow trout.

GUY

You cook 'em up? Eat 'em?

JOE

Yup. Gut 'em right there on the boat, grill them back home on our Viking.

GUY

That's something. That's a skill.

JOE

Yeah, it's fun.

GUY

Excellent.

JOE

What about you?

Beat.

GUY

I buried my mother.

JOE

What?

GUY

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She was. Her body was. I mean her insides. She didn't realize. I mean I guess she was in denial, or. Anyway.

BRUCE

Holy shit.

JOE

I'm so sorry, bro.

BRUCE

Are you okay?

GUY

Yeah. I mean I hadn't seen her in a while. Like four years. Last time I saw her she punched me in the face.

BRUCE

Whoa—

JOE

That's harsh—

GUY

She's a passionate woman. Was. Um. She felt bad though. I think. Her will was. Is. Um. Generous. So.

BRUCE

Well that's gotta take the edge off a little.

Awkward beat.

GUY

Yeah. Moving on. As you know, um. Everyone loved your work on our last two campaigns...

JOE

Yeah.

BRUCE

Not bad for a couple of Ivy League rookies...

GUY

For sure. And there's a lot of potential for growth at this company. They like to reward ambition.

(gestures to self)

Case in point—

BRUCE

Word.

GUY

So. So we're all incredibly curious to hear what you guys have been batting around for this one. There's a bit of um. Heat on this, so to speak...

BRUCE

Yeah we heard.

JOE

Seems like a pretty big dealio.

GUY

It is. So.  
Let's have at it.

BRUCE stands, takes a slightly dramatic pause.

BRUCE

Great. So.

When we sat down to discuss this campaign initially, we were very concerned with the images out there representing our typical consumer.

Gestures to JOE, who acts bored, sad, lonely, etc.

BRUCE (cont.)

Bored, sad, lonely, overwhelmed, freaked out. Curled into a ball in the corner. Female, of course. Bad posture. Shitty hair all over the place. Malnourished. Et cetera. All in desaturated colors, or black-and-white, often grainy treatments. The immediate association is a negative one. The idea being, the consumer connects first with this "before" image.

JOE

"That's me," she thinks, and realizes she's got a big fucking problem. And she needs to transform herself chemically ASAP.

BRUCE

That's the old way. Buh-bye.

She mimes pulling out a rifle and blowing JOE away.

BRUCE (cont.)

It's modern times, folks. Wake up and smell the skepticism. People don't blindly trust Big Pharma the way they used to. These times are organic non-processed locally grown herbally-infused gluten-free no GMO times.

JOE

The modern consumer is savvy to manipulative imagery. She is emotional by nature, and

tends to trust her instincts over her powers of reason. And what do her instincts tell her, when she sees the image of a haggard poorly-dressed sunken-eyed gal balled into a corner? “That gal is fucked up. Glad she isn’t me.”

BRUCE

You see, the quote/unquote “millennial woman” isn’t in the business of defining herself by her worst features. She was raised by parents who treated her like a rare precious flower, and she believes it. She is a projection of her greatest desires for herself, an amalgam of her finest qualities, and the culmination of her noblest aspirations. She is, if you pardon the hyperbolic language, a self-prescribed goddess.

Dramatic pause.

BRUCE

And as a company? We are in not in the business of affirming the negative. Our job is to help the consumer live up to a vision of herself by giving her *tools*.

One tool in particular, that is...

BRUCE and JOE

Effervatol.

BRUCE lowers the lights slightly. JOE taps a little on his computer. A power point presentation reveals a slide show of all the photos of WOMEN LAUGHING ALONE WITH SALAD and WOMEN STRUGGLING TO DRINK WATER. Superimposed on each image is the word “Effervatol,” with a catch phrase next to it.

JOE

“Effervatol. Healthy is happy.”

Next slide.

BRUCE

“Effervatol. It’s you. Only Better.”

Next slide.

JOE

“Effervatol. Release your Bliss.”

Next slide.

BRUCE

“Effervatol. Not Your Mama’s Drugs.”

Next slide.

JOE

“Effervatol. A Day at the Spa. For Your Soul.”

Next slide.

BRUCE

“Effervatol. Don’t Status-Quo It.”

Next slide.

JOE

“Effervatol. Your New BFF!”

Next slide.

BRUCE

“Effervatol. Make Him Want You, Girl.”

Next slide.

JOE

“Effervatol. Better Than Brunch.”

Next slide.

BRUCE

“Effervatol. You Like Orgasms, Right?”

Next slide.

JOE

“Effervatol. Wheeeee!”

BRUCE

And my favorite, although it’s a bit abstract...

Next slide. It says, “Effervatol. YOLO.” JOE giggles.

BRUCE

Oh. Ha! You sneaky bastard.

JOE throws up his hands as if to say, guilty as charged. BRUCE addresses GUY apologetically.

BRUCE (cont.)

That one was clearly a joke. Ha ha. Moving on... This one's my actual favorite....

Next slide. It's the slide from the top of the act.

"Effervatol. You. Are. Here."

Beat. BRUCE lets this last image sit a while. Then he turns the lights up again.

Well. That's what we have so far. Um.

Big beat as GUY considers. JOE sits back down and begins immediately fidgeting with his pencil. JOE closes his computer.

BRUCE

Um.  
What, ah...  
Whattaya think?

Bigger beat.

Lights change. GUY addresses us. JOE and BRUCE don't hear this... they fidget as if they're still waiting for a response.

GUY

So after the funeral, the monsignor and I take the limo back to her place. He says nothing the whole ride there. The second I unlock her door he hobbles straight to her bedroom and grabs some clothes from her closet. Three shirts, two pairs of pants. A suit. Shoes. And then he takes her pillow. I ask, "what're you gonna do with that?" He doesn't answer. Tells me to give the rest to St. Catherine's. Then he leaves.

The first place I go is her fridge. Ketchup, vodka, frozen peas. Like a bachelor.

Then her garbage. Take-out containers. Old bandaids. A bloody towel.

Then her bathroom. Products piled four and five deep on her giant vanity sink. An altar to self-preservation in the church of Gonna-Fucking-Die.

I tell myself I'm gonna do everything else first, then save the pictures til last. I fill two huge trashbags of stuff. But then I get to the hutch and the photo albums are sitting there like a middle finger flipping me off.

The easiest ones to trash are the pictures with me in them. That happy kid kneeling under the Christmas tree with the new ninja turtle, he's as dead as she is. So is the beaming skeleton in the Ramones T-shirt sipping pepsi and bleeding onto his skateboard. Feels good to extinguish those last few smoldering lies.

Then. 1972. Short pixie cut. Striped tank. Round sunnies. Holding her purse in one hand, a sign in the other. "IF YOU WANT MEAT -- GO TO THE BUTCHER." She isn't smiling. None of the women are smiling. Some of them are screaming. She isn't, though. She's just. She's standing. Getting her photo taken.

She's fourteen.

Um.

So I'm staring at her. This sweet preposterous rebellious girl. And I think about the last real girlfriend I had. I think of all the kindnesses I never extended to her. I think about how lost she was. But being lost doesn't make a person a villain. I wish someone had told me that.

Then I think about the day I asked her to move out of my apartment. It was summer. All the windows were open. She was wearing shorts. I asked her to take her bike and leave, and she threw up on her bare legs. She apologized and cleaned up the floor. Then she moved to LA.

Then I think about the girl from the club that night. I think about her smell. Like poison and promise and promiscuity and all that other devious shit. All the devious shit designed to remind a fucked-up dude like me how to be alive.

Then I get angry at myself for reducing that girl to a smell, or to an object whose purpose is to quicken me, or. Because she wasn't a *smell*. She was...

And then I get angry at her for having that power over me. Or for not *realizing* she has that power. Or for realizing it and being scared of it. Or.

Something.

Then I wonder why everything is so fucking complicated. Because all I ever wanted. Was to be quickened. To be swept up in the rush of living. To care enough to beat the shit out of something, or smash a guitar, or pound beers like a caveman, or tear the sleeves off my shirt WHILE I'M WEARING IT, or masturbate furiously into a sock, or any of that other shit that was promised to me as a kid.

But instead. My girlfriend throws up on her legs and moves to LA. And the other girl vanishes into a fat fog of shame. And my mother...

Small beat.

So then I think about what happens after she moves out. I get EXTREME. I pour out my booze. I flush my weed. I change my locks. I buy a new phone. I send out resumes. I take the first job I am offered. I tell my new bosses I want the power to change people's perceptions, even in a small way. They say I've come to the right place. Marketing can move the world. I say I'll do whatever it takes.

Machete.

Rifle.

Torch.

Explosives.

I am gonna set the world ablaze.

I am gonna burn the wreckage of my life on a sacrificial pyre, so the smoke will fill the noses of the ignorant, and that unholy stink, it will smell like REGRET, and they will all say, "oh so THAT's what it smells like." and they will never make the same mistakes that I did.

Um.

So.

So that didn't happen.

Long beat.

Sometimes. I'm at my job. And I'm looking at the walls. Same walls I've been staring at the past four years. And I feel. So. Old.

And in my head I'm like, this isn't happening. None of it. It's a dream. I'm dreaming I'm a mid-level exec in my early-thirties. I'm dreaming I look much older. I look like my mother. I dream I'm surrounded by douchebags. In my dream the douchebags are prep-school boys. The older one minored in Women's Studies. The younger one's parents are therapists. They are promising, bright, attractive idiots. But it's not their fault. They're just scared. Like everyone else.

And then in my dream. Four years pass like nothing. They just pass. And nothing has changed. And I wonder if it's my fault. Because if I had wanted to tear off my sleeves so bad, maybe I wouldn't have put a down-payment on a condo in Williamsburg or started collecting antique string instruments. Or maybe I would have tried a little harder to stop becoming the thing I loathe. Because in my dream. I have become the thing I loathe. It bothers me, but in my dream I say, it's okay, this happens to everyone.

Because I have become the thing I loathe. It bothers me but it's okay, this happens to everyone.

Because I have become the thing I loathe.

Beat.

And then suddenly I have the sensation I'm pedaling on a bicycle across the Brooklyn Bridge at sunset, and the road tips down and my dirty city feet fly from the pedals and the pedals spin-spin-spin and the sky goes black and the bridge disappears and all I feel is the terror of not stopping and the summer wind is too hot against my skin and I'm getting burned, I'm blistering, and in my terror I scream at that wind and beg it to tell me the story of the women who haunt me and it screams back, "No asshole, figure it out!" And I scream, "How??!! I don't fucking know how!"

And at that moment. I understand two things. One. This is not a dream. It is an exaggerated reality. The douches aren't quite so douchey. The walls aren't quite so grey. I'm not quite so old. But it's real.

And two. I am about to walk into my boss's office. And immolate myself.

Beat.

So. This might be my last blog entry for a while. Who needs to read more tedious shit about a young dude in the big bad city with an ulcer and a creative writing degree?

No one.

Especially when the dude has no idea what to say.

GUY turns to JOE and BRUCE.

They have not heard a word GUY has said.

BRUCE

So...

They're still in progress, obviously--

GUY

Clearly a lot of time and thought went into these.

You clearly care about the consumer.

You clearly understand her needs.

Her desires.

Much like you understood the consumer's needs and desires for our erectile dysfunction pill and our hair-loss treatment.

Seems like you have the finger on the pulse of our culture.

BRUCE  
(delighted)

Wow. Are you serious?

JOE

We did a lot of research on this one—

GUY

It shows.

It shows.

I'm looking forward to hearing what Alice thinks.

Small beat.

JOE

Um....

GUY

I have a feeling she'll really respond to them...

BRUCE

I mean they're a mess. They're just mock-ups. The font is wrong, we didn't do drop-shadows—

GUY

It's all right—

JOE

And we, don't we usually narrow it down to one or two? After everyone weighs in?

GUY

We can go to the big boss directly for this one, I think. It feels important enough.

JOE

But like. I mean we were just riffing. Being edgy--

GUY

I understand--

BRUCE

I mean some of them could be perceived as like. Um borderline offensive? I mean to the, the ah, the *new regime*?

GUY

(small beat)

It's fine.

BRUCE

Wow. Okay. Um. We set up a page on the internal server. I'll send you a link when I get back to my desk.

GUY

Perfect. Thank you.

He holds out his hand to BRUCE and JOE.

GUY (cont)

Good work.

BRUCE and JOE

Thanks.

They shake hands. Good, solid handshakes.  
BRUCE and JOE exit.

GUY remains alone.

A LONE LETTUCE LEAF flutters from the sky  
and lands at GUY's feet.

He picks it up. Stares at it. Throws it in the trash.  
Exits.

### PART ELEVEN: THE CORNER OFFICE

A lush corner office. Well-appointed desk.

The actor who played GUY is now playing  
ALICE, C.E.O. of the pharma company. She is  
seated behind a desk. She wears a feminine,  
tasteful ensemble. She is pleasant, pretty, in  
control.

GUY sits across from her. He's nervous.

GUY

Okay so, before you peruse the images, let me just say this:

As you may know

I've been at this company four years

This campaign is.

It's different.

It's provocative.

And I'm certainly in a position to judge.

Um.

My mother was an activist.

My father was an asshole.

I have a creative writing degree.

I've gotten a blowjob from a man.

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Um.  
I love horseback riding and snowboarding.  
I collect vintage guitars don't play.  
I've had an ulcer since I was twenty.  
Um.  
I have empathy for people.  
Real empathy—

ALICE

I've already looked at them.

GUY  
(shocked)

What, really? Wow. That was fast--

ALICE  
(not impatient; apologetic)

I don't have a lot of time. It's my assistant Jordan's birthday, they're doing a little thing for him any minute. Also I have to feed Juliet.

GUY

It's so great having her here, isn't it?

ALICE

It is. Though I'm getting a ton of flack in the press for putting in the nursery. Especially from women. But my focus is so much sharper with her on site. Plus I can work longer hours.

GUY

It's win-win, really.

ALICE

It is.

GUY

And it takes a lot of courage, doing something like that after only having been here a couple months.

ALICE

I'm happy with the decision.  
In general I have a hard time feeling shame for the things I want.

GUY

I hear that.

ALICE

So.  
Effervatol.

(re: her computer)

Where did these images come from?

GUY

They're available for purchase on the high-level stock photography sites. Of course if the product does well we'll have a dedicated campaign, but for now we're just talking like, minimal print and online. So.

Beat. ALICE seems to be waiting for further explanation.

GUY (cont.)

Um so as far as the images, we were looking for the equivalent of The Idealized Modern Female. Meaning: healthy, active, slender, bright, positive, energetic, self-possessed, relaxed, sexy, confident, gorgeous, independent, accomplished, intelligent, empathetic, well-read, honest, maternal, youthful, chaste, endearing, funny, fun-loving, lucid, um, feminine, athletic, charming, benevolent, kind, educated, outgoing, engaged, present, concerned, intuitive, thoughtful, flexible, hilarious, um, communicative, warm, approachable, compassionate, and wise. So. Oh but also, and this is pretty huge.... *non-threatening*. Our consumer doesn't want to hate these women. Our consumer wants to *be* these women.

ALICE

Why salad?

GUY

Well to our capitalist um neoliberal society, salad imagery represents self-control and status.

Small beat.

Oh and I suppose there's a subtextual shaming going on? As well? Women respond incredibly well to this sort of reinforcement. Studies show.

Longish beat.

I like that dress—

ALICE

You do know where I come from, don't you?

GUY

What, you mean like, originally?

ALICE

I mean, philosophically.

GUY

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Well you're a woman in a powerful position, so. You value hard work.--

ALICE

I graduated with honors from Stanford University with a B.S. in symbolic systems, an M.B.A. in finance, and a Ph.D. in immunology.

GUY

Oh / wow

ALICE

I have a J.D. from Yale Law, an MFA from RiSD, and an honorary degree from Trenton State in experimental theology. They recruited me from a Fortune 100 Company at which I was making seven figures. And here I am, delivering my resume to you to prove a point. Do you know why they hired me?

GUY

Um, yes. To change the face of the company. Shake things up. Make our brand appear more relevant—

ALICE

“Appear.”

GUY

Poor choice of words—

ALICE

My job. Is to make sure our sales are healthy and our brand is represented in a way that feels fresh, modern, and above all, *responsible*. Because we have not done this in the past. And we are on the verge of being hurt by it. Of being perceived as hackneyed and out-of-touch.

So. To avoid this, we must be a) accountable for what we have done in the past, and b) savvy about how we proceed in the future. *This* is what will set us ahead of our competition. *This* is why I was hired.

By extension, is this your job as well?

GUY

It is.

ALICE

So. Do you believe these images will sell pills?

GUY

Absolutely.

ALICE

And do you also believe they are responsible?

Beat.

GUY

I don't know.

ALICE

If you don't know, the answer must be "no." Mustn't it.

GUY is silent.

ALICE (cont.)

Do you have any daughters?

GUY

No. No children.

ALICE

Do you have a mother?

GUY

Yes. She passed.

ALICE

What do you think she would have made of these images?

GUY ponders for a good while. He speaks with a mixture of grief, pride, vulnerability, and defeat.

GUY

I think.

I think she would have said.

"Look at that psycho anorexic ferret-looking yoga bitch.

I bet she'd make a great wife."

ALICE leans into GUY. Intimate, with sympathy and understanding...

ALICE

Here's what I understand about this moment.

You're here right now

Because you want me to do something.

Something you don't have the courage to do on your own.

Is this correct?

Beat.

Yes. GUY

Why. ALICE

Because. GUY  
I am so.  
Tired.

Longish beat. ALICE begins to show GUY the door.

ALICE  
It's been a pleasure working with you these brief few months. Someone will escort you to HR, after which you may gather your belongings from your work area. I wish you much luck in your future endeavors, and thank you so much for your time with our company--

GUY goes berserk. Smashes a guitar. Does push-ups. Drinks four beers. Masturbates into a sock. Punches a wall. Punches himself. Drinks more beer. Lifts some weights. Tears the sleeves off his shirt. Rapes the desk. Roars like a lion.

ALICE watches this all very calmly.

Then he's done. Beat as he catches his breath.

ALICE stands and approaches him. She holds out her hand for a handshake.

Goodbye. ALICE (cont.)

GUY does not take ALICE's hand.

Suddenly, several voices from off-stage can be heard singing.

SEVERAL VOICES FROM OFF-STAGE

Happy Birthday to you  
Happy Birthday to you  
Happy Birthday dear Jordan  
Happy birthday to you!

Much cheering.

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GUY still does not take ALICE's hand.

VOICE ONE FROM OFF-STAGE

Make a wish!

GUY finally takes ALICE's hand. They shake.  
He does not let go.

From off: Breath. Applause.

Then.

VOICE TWO FROM OFF-STAGE

Hey Alice, come grab a piece of cake!

Blackout.

**END OF PLAY**